

**Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, DC 20554**

In the Matter of)	WT Docket No. 05-235
)	
Amendment of Part 97 of the Commission's Rules)	
To Implement WRC-03 Regulations Applicable to)	
Requirements for Operator Licenses in the)	
Amateur Radio Service)	

TO: The Commission

COMMENTS OF JOHN B. JOHNSTON

THIS COMMENTER

1. These are the comments of John B. Johnston ("this commenter"), license grantee of amateur station W3BE; a Commission-licensed amateur operator of over fifty-one years; and an Amateur Extra Class licensee for over forty years. It is being filed in response to the *Notice of Proposed Rule Making and Order* ("Notice") in the heading Docket. This commenter is a volunteer examiner ("VE"); a volunteer license examination preparation instructor; a designated Elmer¹ for a local amateur radio club; and the author of some 100 columns published in the amateur service print media.² These columns answer its readers' questions about the Commission's rules for our amateur service. As such, this commenter has great interest in the future well being of our amateur service and for maintaining harmony and goodwill within our amateur service community. Success in this endeavor would allow our amateur service community to better fulfill the purpose of the amateur service and would better enhance the usefulness of the amateur service to the public.

INTRODUCTION

2. In the Notice, the Commission proposes to revise our amateur service rules to eliminate the telegraphy testing requirement for a General or Amateur Extra Class operator license grant. It believes that this proposed rule change will allow amateur service licensees to

¹ "Elmer" is a term for an operator who helps others resolve day-to-day technical and operating issues encountered in the amateur service community.

better fulfill the purpose of the amateur service and will enhance the usefulness of the amateur service to the public and licensees. The *Notice* demonstrates that the Commission has an excellent understanding of the unique nature of our amateur service. This commenter, however, takes exception on two very critical issues:

CONTINUE THE TELEGRAPHY REQUIREMENT FOR AN AMATEUR EXTRA CLASS LICENSE GRANT

3. Our telegraphy examinations have served our amateur service exceptionally well, ever since the very dawn of radio over a century ago when practically no one - other than our fledgling amateur service community - even knew there was such a thing as radio. Our top-rank Amateur Extra Class is now composed of our 106,909 most expert operators³, all of which are telegraphy qualified. We are perfectly decentralized throughout all of our United States and Territories. It took nearly 54-years of study, training, examination and work to build this highly respected and important National resource.⁴ It stands as an inspiration to all lesser-qualified operators as to the high level of individual expertise that is achievable in our amateur service. It should not be compromised in any way. A “telegraphy-challenged amateur radio expert” would be an oxymoron, indeed. Therefore, this commenter urges the Commission to not adopt its proposal to discontinue its requirement for a telegraphy proficiency demonstration necessary to qualify for this class of license grant, at least. Such continuation will help us maintain our cadre of Amateur Extra Class operators. This will allow our amateur service community to better fulfill the purpose of the amateur service and would better enhance the usefulness of the amateur service to the public and licensees than would the deletion of the requirement.

MAKE THE TELEGRAPHY QUALIFICATION MORE REALISTIC AND LESS STRESSFUL

² The columns Rules and Regs – The Rules Say... have appeared in WorldRadio, AutoCall and the QCWA JOURNAL.

³ As of July 5, 2005.

⁴ The Amateur Extra Class became available on January 1, 1952 as a result of action taken in the Report and Order in Docket 9295.

4. The telegraphy qualification requirement, however, should not be the passing of the current, outmoded simulated radio examination where, under the pressure of being scrutinized intensely by three volunteer examiners, the applicant must copy an unknown telegraphy message. Such is not an accurate or fair way to prove that the examinee can actually send by hand and receive by ear, telegraphy messages over-the air. Our National Conference of Volunteer-Examiner Coordinators, moreover, has put the FCC on notice, in RM-10787, that it does not want telegraphy examinations. This need not be an issue. Qualification by simulated radio operation is no longer necessary now that all of our current operator licensees are authorized to exchange CW messages over-the air. Thus, this commenter urges the Commission to amend our amateur service rules to require our VEs to simply rely upon their viewing of certain documents⁵ that confirm the applicant for an Amateur Extra Class operator license has completed successfully the sending by hand and the receiving by ear of messages sent in telegraphy over-the-air. Such an amendment would allow our amateur service community to better fulfill the purpose of the amateur service and would better enhance the usefulness of the amateur service to the public.

SUMMARY

5. The Commission is to be congratulated on the excellence of the *Notice*. The amendments proposed therein, with the two revisions described above, will facilitate the future well being of our amateur service and for maintaining harmony and goodwill within our amateur service community. Such continuation would allow our amateur service community to better fulfill the purpose of the amateur service and would better enhance the usefulness of the amateur service to the public and licensees than would the deletion of the telegraphy requirement.

Respectfully submitted,

John B. Johnston
FRN 0003115342
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⁵ Our Amateur Service Community has in place a highly workable and effective “QSL” system to confirm that a station-to-station radio contact actually took place at a specific time and date on a specific frequency band using a certain type of emission.

